

**Fact Sheet**  
**Origin of Online iClaims Pop-ups**

***Synopsis:***

- A complaint was received from an Advisory Board Staffer from a constituent that a person filing a SSA claim online experienced “pop-ups” that directed/steered the person toward claimant representatives.
- On February 26, 2015, Deputy Inspector General (DIG) Gale Stone requested the Office of Investigations’ (OI) assistance in determining the potential nature of “pop-ups” received by claimants online. DIG Stone advised that the SSA does not utilize “pop-ups” or online representative to assist with internet claims (iClaims).

***Findings of Investigation:***

- OI’s Digital Forensics Team (DFT) conducted research into the issue of online “pop-ups” that are being received during iClaim applications. Initially, the DFT checked the SSA Spam and Phishing electronic mailboxes to determine if there were any received/pending complaints relative to this issue. This search ended in negative results.
- DFT then consulted with our Office of Counsel to the Inspector General (OCIG). OCIG advised they have received complaints in the past; however, to date they have been unable to substantiate any claims due to the inability to obtain screenshots of the actual “pop-ups.”
- Further research determined that Internet Service Providers (ISP) provide a service to companies, for a fee, in which they will provide that company’s “pop-up” or advertisements every time an individual goes to a certain website. For example, a representative firm such as Disability Advocates could pay Comcast Communications a fee to have their “pop-up” appear on a computer user’s screen every time they visited [ssa.gov/iclaim/dib](http://ssa.gov/iclaim/dib). If the user did not have the proper internet security software, the “pop-ups” would appear on their screens. This is a legitimate business practice.
- An article was located on Fox News that explains how cellular phone carriers sell user’s search and browsing history to advertisers. The following is an excerpt from this article:

**The secret your cellphone company doesn't want you to know**  
FOX NEWS | MARCH 7, 2015

[http://www.foxnews.com/tech/2015/03/07/secret-your-cellphone-company-doesnt-want-to-know/?cmpid=app\\_pulse&utm\\_medium=referral&utm\\_source=pulsenews](http://www.foxnews.com/tech/2015/03/07/secret-your-cellphone-company-doesnt-want-to-know/?cmpid=app_pulse&utm_medium=referral&utm_source=pulsenews)

Recently, AT&T surprised everyone when it added a new option to its GigaPower fiber Internet service: privacy. Yes, for just \$29 more a month, AT&T promises it WON'T sell your search and browsing history to advertisers... The truth is, the major cellphone carriers are more than happy to sell your information to advertisers and serve you targeted ads over their networks.

***Next Steps:***

- SSA may consider initiating a campaign to create public awareness that SSA websites do not contain “pop-ups” or advertisements.